



Figure 1-1 Eisenhower East Study Area

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INTRODUCTION

Eisenhower East provides the City of Alexandria with the unique opportunity to create a shared vision with the community for a vibrant, new, urban, mixed-use community centered around the Eisenhower Avenue Metro Station. This new transit-focused neighborhood will include a variety of natural and urban open spaces and parks, a balance of jobs and residents, and a retail/entertainment center, serving both a local and regional market that capitalizes on the existing theater complex.

In economic terms, Eisenhower East is a resource of paramount importance to the City of Alexandria, as it provides the foundation for the City's near and long-term commercial and residential growth. It represents, for the City, an opportunity to create additional value outside the historic core by defining a new sense of place to which people and investment will be attracted, thus ensuring a sound fiscal future in the years to come.

Eisenhower East also plays a highly important strategic role in preserving and enhancing the existing historic, Old Town urban core at the center of the City. With the significant development pressure in the City, Eisenhower East captures the new investment capital, which can no longer locate in the well established Old Town, and provides an opportunity for future development to benefit from connection with the historic center. Eisenhower East offers the exciting possibility of creating a new city within a city, with distinctive architecture, a mix of businesses, residences, retail

spaces, grand boulevards and parks and gardens, creating an address complementary to and compatible with Old Town and the residential neighborhoods.

The planning for Eisenhower East echoes the 18th-century challenge that faced Alexandria's forefathers in designing the blueprint for the City's origins at the edge of the Potomac River. In these formative years, the city founders wisely chose to carefully lay out a harmonious street grid system adjacent to the waterfront providing room for commerce and domicile.

Today, in the current planning effort, the City looks back to these sound urban design principles, which are the basis for the City's evolution and forward looking approach to the requirements of modern development.

In transportation terms, Eisenhower East represents enormous opportunities and challenges. In terms of opportunities, it is at the confluence of major regional thoroughfares such as the Capital Beltway, U.S. Route 1 and the scenic George Washington Parkway, and is serviced by two Metro lines, Amtrak passenger train service to New York and Richmond, and the Northern Virginia Railway Express commuter service. Alexandria is minutes from downtown Washington, D.C. and three metropolitan airports.

In terms of challenges, large undeveloped parcels

must be configured to take advantage of the location of the two Metro stations that bracket the study area, to incorporate pedestrian-friendly amenities that encourage walking to and from transit, and to minimize the impacts of traffic and parking. A focus of this planning effort is to ensure that the combination of transit services, highway access, and local streets will be adequate to support the anticipated level of development.

PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

The Need for Planning

The 230 acres comprising Eisenhower East hold promise for the greatest concentration of new development within the City limits in the coming decades. It encompasses not only the 76.5-acre Carlyle development and the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) complex, but also large tracts of land held by individual owners and corporations for which no transportation, development or design standards have been established.

Within the study boundaries of Eisenhower East lies the potential for build-out of approximately 17 million square feet of development. At this writing, Eisenhower East includes 4.3 million square feet of existing development, 6.2 million square feet of development approved and under construction, and 6.5 million square feet of potential development addressed in this Plan.

The challenge facing the City in this Plan is how to guide and manage development of this magnitude, while protecting the fabric of existing neighborhoods, in a manner that complements and enhances the urban design and historic characteristics of Alexandria and provides certainty and guidance to the development community.

The quality of life of the citizens in the years to come will be increasingly affected by how the City:

- Manages the projected traffic impacts of this development;
- Encourages the creation of high quality building design and a rich mixture of activities which makes an exciting and livable community; and
- Provides for the integration of broad boulevards, tranquil open spaces and easy pedestrian movement within this new urban context.

How the City responds to these challenges will, to a large extent, determine how the City will continue to grow and prosper in the coming years.

It is clear that the City of Alexandria will benefit most from well-planned development that creates a livable community, maximizes transit and minimizes congestion, and coordinates planning among the large property owners. This approach poses a unique challenge and a unique opportunity to the City, as well as to the development community with which it is working.

The Purpose

The purpose of this Plan is to establish the City's vision for the Eisenhower East area as a sophisticated, full-service urban environment with mass transit amenities and a local grid of streets, incorporating outdoor plazas, parks, and promenades and a broad boulevard flanked by buildings of quality architecture on a human scale. To accomplish this, the Plan recommends establishing the:

- Mix of uses, the intensity of development and the location of uses which best implement the vision;
- Transportation, infrastructure and open space requirements needed to create an attractive urban environment; and
- Architectural and urban design standards needed to construct a streetscape and skyline, contributing to an overall sense of place and capitalizing on development potential.

POLICY DIRECTIVES ON EISENHOWER EAST

1974 – 1992 Policy Directives

Over the past quarter-century, the City of Alexandria has undertaken a series of planning efforts designed to clarify the City's policy with regard to the future development of Eisenhower East.

In 1974, a revision to the City's Master Plan recognized:

“the potential impact of the Metrorail system, the growing problems of traffic congestion, the need for affordable housing, adequate recreational facilities and open space, the growing public concern with good urban design and the need to protect residential neighborhoods, historic areas and the natural environment. The Plan also recognized the need for Alexandria to remain economically competitive within the region and to develop employment opportunities for its residents” [1992 Adopted Master Plan, “Land Use” summary, p. 3, referencing the 1974 Master Plan.]

When the City adopted the *King Street/Eisenhower Avenue Metro Station Small Area Plan* as part of the City's 1992 Master Plan, it addressed the issues of land use, development intensity, and zoning in

Eisenhower East. It established goals for urban design, mixed use and transit facilities. These goals were to be implemented through the adoption of a “Coordinated Development District Zone” (CDD).

The purpose of the CDD zone was to allow limited levels of development using conventional zones, and to allow greater levels of development for projects that would undergo a discretionary review process governing affordable housing and design quality. This approach was intended to ensure harmonious and coordinated development among individual large parcels.

2000 – 2002 Policy Directives

The City was undergoing extraordinary development pressures as it entered the new millennium. In response to this challenge, the Mayor and City Council determined to undertake a more active role in defining and shaping the City's future by adopting the comprehensive *Plan for Planning* [June, 2001]. Using this approach as a basis, the City, in concert with its citizens, began a series of planning initiatives designed to clearly identify a shared vision for the future and establish how new development should fit within its existing urban context.

The *Plan for Planning* identified Eisenhower East as an area of:

“explosive growth pressures ...unprecedented in our history and influential to our future...The challenge is to ensure that this new development is coordinated with and contributes to the established character of our City. Here, the City does not yet have the development, transportation and design standards in place needed to guide new investment.” [p.2]

City Council Directives: Eisenhower East

Responding to this need in November 2001, the City Council offered the following directives for the planning of Eisenhower East. The area should:

- Possess a lively environment with a mix of uses – retail, residential and office;
- Be a pedestrian-friendly urban village;
- Be considered an economic development area with higher density development, taking advantage of the Metro;
- Maximize the use of the Metro and other transit services, with consideration given to reducing parking to the most feasible level; and
- Provide recreation and cultural enhancements with usable open space.

With this directive, the City moved beyond the CDD process of 1992 and endorsed a comprehensive, area-wide planning process that built upon the adopted zoning and the urban design goals of 1992. This directive sought to engage community-wide participation in the development of an area-wide plan, addressing major issues with city-wide impacts such as traffic and transit, open space and recreational facilities, architectural design, and pedestrian amenities.

The Eisenhower East Planning Process: 2001-2003

Under the direction of the Planning Commission, the City designed a wide-ranging planning participation process which included property owners and businesses in Eisenhower, the Eisenhower Partnership, Civic Associations, interested citizens, and all relevant departments and agencies within the City.

Led by the Department of Planning and Zoning, a detailed five phase planning process was outlined that included data compilation and analysis, community workshops, development of framework, identification of alternatives, and refinement of a concept plan.

Planning Commission Policies for Eisenhower East

In May 2002, based on the public input received at the planning workshops as well as consultant analysis of the issues, the Planning Commission endorsed 10 recommendations for development of a comprehensive approach. Eisenhower East should:

1. Create an *urban* not suburban development – an extension of Old Town/Carlyle;
2. Establish Eisenhower East as the City’s primary economic development area;
3. Utilize a design process that works with property owners and community stakeholders to realize the vision;
4. Protect adjacent neighborhoods from adverse impacts;
5. Maximize the use of Metro and other transit:
 - Office should be concentrated near Metro;
 - Housing and retail should also be provided near Metro to support 16 hour/7 day per week activity;
 - Shuttle transit options should be provided with frequent headways; and
 - Rigorous Transportation Management programs should be implemented.

6. Establish Eisenhower Avenue as a grand “urban boulevard” providing:

- A friendly pedestrian route to Metro; and
- A balance of pedestrian and auto uses and urban open space

7. Ensure a network of urban streetscapes designed to provide:

- A balance of auto, pedestrian, transit and open spaces;
- Smaller blocks consistent with the pattern of Old Town blocks defined by building facades of appropriate heights; and
- Sidewalks sized to accommodate street activity.

8. Create a balanced plan for a quality urban environment by providing:

- A jobs/housing balance by shifting use from office to housing;
- An appropriate economic balance between revenue and cost of services;
- A level of development tied to performance criteria;
- A mix housing types and sizes; and
- An appropriate level of affordable housing.

9. Provide a coordinated open space/recreation system of:

- Public spaces and streets interconnected and varied;
- Resource Protection Areas protected/ rehabilitated & expanded; and
- Open spaces and squares linked with the existing spaces in Carlyle (e.g. Dulany Gardens and John Carlyle Street).

10. Ensure parking programs and parking standards consistent with urban – not suburban – models:

- Adequate & convenient on and off-street public parking;
- Parking for office and residential uses consistent with distance from major transit; and
- Incentives for underground parking/ disincentives for above grade parking that dominates the streetscape.

This Plan reflects the directives of the City Council and the recommendations of the Planning Commission and is a result of the continuing dialogue with a wide range of participants, including property owners, developers, and community stakeholders. For that reason, this Plan does not represent a static or inflexible document, but rather one that establishes a broad policy framework to guide the development of programs and projects over an extended period of time.



Planning workshop, May 2002



Planning workshop, May 2002

I N T R O D U C T I O N



Planning workshop, May 2002

Specific recommendations are provided where specific approaches are necessary to achieve public objectives, and more general recommendations where multiple approaches may be considered.

Each recommendation within this Plan should be weighed for its ability to accomplish the overall goals, and whether it strengthens and reinforces the other recommendations, and contributes to the creation of the shared vision for the future.